

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church
Parish Council Meeting February 17, 2021
7:35 PM – 8:35 PM – through Zoom

Attendees (Absent):

Pastor John Snider, Pastor Tim Thompson, Gary Westman, Merrill Ziemann, Sue Clark, Debbie Pirkel, Joy Stenhaug, Mary Molumby, Teresa Tschida, Sara Ruff, Joanna Mead, Beth Hostager, Diane Meyers, Eric Donahue, Jessica Donahue, Kim Richter, Lori Ritt, John Anderson, Annette Youness, Tracy Westman, Ali Schloesser-Brecht, Mark Rogosheske, Vicki Jackson

AGENDA

1) Opening prayer / Devotional (Pastor John)

2) Minutes approved – January 20, 2021 meeting (Gary)

3) Updates from Executive Committee

- a) Status of Communications Coordinator position
- b) Nominating Committee & Committee Opening(s)
 - i) 3 open positions / Need filled by end of February
 - ii) Vicki volunteered. Please let Pastor John know of anyone that might be interested.
- c) St. Stephen's Foundation
 - i) Structure of finance and foundation committee in review
- d) Payroll Protection Loan
 - i) \$40,000 payroll protection loan was received during COVID 19
 - ii) We are in the process of requesting forgiveness of the loan
 - iii) more updates to come
- e) Long Range Planning Initiative with Pete Ruess
 - i) Executive committee recommends going with Pastor Pete Ruess
 - ii) Finished product: 3 yr plan / meeting goals / \$3,000 fee
 - iii) Need volunteers / 6 month commitment / 3-4 hrs a month meeting time
 - iv) Motion to move forward with this plan
 - (1) Motion by Sara / 2nd by Vicki / discussion / motion carried
- f) Coronavirus Response – Safety Committee – Merrill
 - i) Meets every 2 weeks

4) Committee Reports/Updates – Please email updates in advance of meeting

- a) Pastor Reports – pages 3 & 4
- b) Property & Maintenance – no report
- c) Christian Education - page 5
- d) Youth & Family – no report
 - i) WAPO sign-up open until end of month

- e) Finance – no report
- f) Stewardship - page 5
- g) Missions - page 6
- h) Worship & Music – no report
- i) Inviting – no report
- j) Fellowship – Sara
 - i) Zoom coffee hour after Sunday worship
- k) Nominating
 - i) If you are interested or know of someone, please contact Pastor John

5) Important Dates

Next Council Meeting – Wednesday, March 17, 7:35 PM

6) Adjourn

11 months of Covid restraints, 1 year when we meet next month. We've done well as leaders and the community of St. Stephen's has been strong. We've been creative, faithful and patient. We have learned a lot of new skills and new understandings about the faith and our part in it. It will be important to recognize that coming back together will not be like it was before the pandemic. We have been shaped by this profound experience and it will take a while to work out the transformed St. Stephen's. The Good News is that the Good News still applies and we can be even more faithful and responsive to the Lord.

Here are a few items to bring to your attention.

1. **Let's Talk**, our 8 year relationship with a local mosque, is discussing ways to make a difference together. We're taking on very deep topics between the faiths and our histories, presently Jerusalem and the Crusades. We are also beginning to explore broader topics. Are there current issues of community concern we could address together.
2. **Contemplative Prayer and Study**. We are re-reading the basic text about prayer: Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening by Cynthia Bourgeault. I have said these practices can renew your prayer life. I didn't recognize that a renewed prayer life renews the rest of your life. All are welcome 2nd and 4th Wednesdays every month.
3. Great job on the **Annual Meeting!** Well lead. Wonderful presentations from the Finance Committee.
4. The **Foundation** is going to join the Stewardship Committee (and the Finance Committee?) on Thursday, March 4 for a zoom meeting with our stewardship cohort to hear a presentation from the ELCA about the place of a Foundation (deferred giving) in a congregation's full stewardship response.
5. **Lent** is creative and organized and I'm grateful for our whole team once again rising to meet the challenges. Special shout out to Lori Ritt and Loren Van Pelt for solving the problem of securing the cross where the manger was.
6. The Congregational Tool Kit is Saturday, February 27th at 9 a.m. It is free but registration is required and can be found on the St. Paul Area Synod website: [Saint Paul Area Synod - Evangelical Lutheran Church of America \(spas-elca.org\)](https://www.spas-elca.org) The topics are listed below. Our special guest this year is Dr. Michael Osterholm. Lots of learning opportunities!
 - a. Presidents/Vice-Presidents Forum
 - b. How to Become an Effective Treasurer
 - c. Navigating Differences That Make a Difference - The IDI as Tool & Guide
 - d. Standing With Immigrants: From Resolution to Action
 - e. The Digital Opportunity: Evangelism in a Screen Dependent World
 - f. Evaluating Your Building for Ministry
 - g. Kairos Time, Chronos Time, COVID Time: Reimagining Sabbath-Keeping in This Unusual Season

Council Update – February 2021 Pastor Tim Thompson

Worship – Thanks to some great planning work from Bryon, John and Jan, and extra time spent doing advance recording (Bryon, John, Jan, Debbie, + a host of tech team folks) and with help from Lori Ritt swapping paraments back and forth, we are in good shape for Ash Wednesday and mid-week worship services! Pre-recorded services will “premier” on Facebook at both 11am and 7pm on these Wednesdays. It’s a loss of course to not be worshipping in person, but there is an unexpected benefit as well: with these services all done in advance, the Lenten season will be far less hectic for a lot of the staff.

Racism Workshop – I’m delighted that we’ve been able to arrange for my stepdaughter, Rachel Cagle, to be our facilitator for this four-week workshop! She is the Equity and Inclusion Coordinator for Metro Transit and the workshop is one that she herself created for her own congregation. **Please register at the Facebook page: bit.ly/ShortDisc** and note that there are **two things to look at before the first session** on February 25th.

Facebook Metrics – “Attendance” at the Well and on Sundays is stable with one exception. On the Wednesday that pastor John talked about having COVID the Well attendance was about 2.5x normal, which led to the spike of attendance to 73 for the month of January. Also worth noting is that the number of “likes” we have for our page is on a very steady growth path since early in the pandemic. I’m eager to see what our new staff person might be able to do to capitalize on that!

Below are the updated Facebook metrics.

Blessings!

Pastor Tim

Education Committee Notes for Feb.18th, 2021

*Shine story bibles were bought for the first graders. They will use these bibles until they enter confirmation and at that time they will be given a study bible. The how to read the bible class will now be given to the kids as they enter confirmation instead of third grade.

*We have possibly 5 kids who will be taking their first communion on Maundy Thursday. Tracy and John are discussing how this might look with the five families.

*We purchased prayer books for the upcoming 8-10 baptisms.

STEWARDSHIP NOTES:

We met at the end of January to prepare for an SAS COHORT call the first week in February. Had some great ideas to motivate us for ongoing stewardship efforts.

We will be working on ensuring updates are passed on to the congregation on goal accomplishments and progress, and we will be working on a spring stewardship initiative and possible special appeal.

Statements were mailed out in time for month end.

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church

Mission Committee meeting

The mission committee met on January 29 via Zoom. Those present were Pastor John, Diane Merrill, Jenny Van Pelt and Vicki Jackson. Diane is St. Stephen's representative to Neighbor's, Inc and she volunteered to join the committee. Thank you, Diane.

We discussed the Loaves and Fishes program. It was decided to host a drive-by Pots and Pans offering on Sunday, February 21 from 10:30 to 11:30 in the parking lot. Jenny and Vicki will collect that offering.

March is Mn FoodShare month. Our participation will look different this year. We decided to have a drive-by donation for this program, also. On Sunday, March 28, from 10:30 to 11:30 we will invite the congregation to drive into the Charlton parking lot with their donations of food or cash and we will collect them there. Our donations go to the Neighbor's, Inc. food shelf in S St. Paul.

We discussed the 2021 mission benevolence allocation. St. Stephen's will give \$39,529 this year, which is 10% of 2020 giving excluding special gifts. We approved the allocation.

We talked briefly about some undesignated funds from large gifts the church has received. Pastor John suggested that we make a recommendation to the council as to how these funds could be disbursed. We tabled this for further discussion.